

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-15
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FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1984
SECDEF
INFO USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS
USNMR SHAPE
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CINCUSAFE
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UNCLAS LONDON 05017

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: MPOL, NATO, UK
SUBJECT: HOUSE OF COMMONS DEBATE ON 1977 DEFENSE ESTI-
MATES

REFERENCE: (A) LONDON 4843; (B) LONDON 4938

1. THE SECOND DAY OF THE DEBATE ON THE DEFENSE ESTIMATES IS SCHEDULED FOR MONDAY, MARCH 28. ON THE FIRST DAY THE GOVERNMENT WAS SAVED FROM THE SLINGS, ARROWS AND BARBS OF ITS LEFT-WINGERS ATTACKING DEFENSE POLICY BECAUSE ON TUESDAY THEY WISHED TO AVOID AN ASSAULT ON THE GOVERNMENT JUST BEFORE WEDNESDAY CONFIDENCE VOTE. NOW THAT CALLAGHAN HAS SUCCESSFULLY DEFLECTED THE CONSERVATIVE ASSAULT, THE TRIBUNE GROUP HAS ANNOUNCED IT WILL NOT SUPPORT THE GOVERNMENT ON THE DEFENSE ESTIMATES VOTE.

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2. WITHOUT DOUBT THE TRIBUNITES AND OTHER FAR LEFT-WINGERS WILL USE THE SECOND DAY OF DEBATE ON DEFENSE AS A CONVENIENT MEANS FOR VENTING ANGER OVER THE CALLAGHAN-STEEL DEAL WHICH SAVED THE GOVERNMENT FROM FALLING (REFTEL B). THE PRESENT MOOD OF DISCONTENT WITHIN THE EXTREME LEFT WILL BE TRIGGERED OFF BY THEIR LONG RUMBLING DISSATISFACTION WITH THE "HIGH LEVEL" OF DEFENSE SPEND-

ING. WE ANTICIPATE A FIERCE AND RAUCOUS DEBATE SET IN MOTION BY THE AMENDMENT TABLED BY THE TRIBUNE GROUP URGING THE GOVERNMENT TO QUOTE: CARRY OUT ITS ELECTION COMMITMENT, TO REDUCE THE PROPORTION OF BRITAIN'S RESOURCES DEVOTED TO ARMS TO THAT OF THE MAJOR NATO POWERS; DEVOTE THE SAVINGS TO HOUSING, HEALTH, EDUCATION, SOCIAL SERVICES, OVERSEAS AID AND THE REEQUIPMENT OF INDUSTRY; DRAW UP IMMEDIATE PLANS FOR THE REDEPLOYMENT OF WORKERS AND RESOURCES AWAY FROM ARMS PRODUCTION TO SOCIALLY USEFUL PURPOSES ALONG THE LINES OF THE SUGGESTIONS MADE BY THE LUCAS AEROSPACE SHOP STEWARDS' COMBINE COMMITTEE AND THE VICKERS SHOP STEWARDS' COMBINE COMMITTEE; AND CUT THE MOUNTING LOSS IN FOREIGN EXCHANGE FROM THE DEFENSE COMMITMENT. END QUOTE

3. THIS AMENDMENT GIVES WARNING TO THE GOVERNMENT THAT MANY BACKBENCHERS WILL WANT TO QUESTION A WHOLE RANGE OF THE GOVERNMENT'S SPENDING PLANS. WHILE IT PROMISES TO BE AN INTERESTING SECOND DAY OF DEBATE, THE GOVERNMENT DOES NOT HAVE TO FEAR THE OUTCOME OF THE VOTE--BECAUSE ON DEFENSE MATTERS THE GOVERNMENT CAN COUNT ON THE BACKING OF CONSERVATIVES AND LIBERALS, EVEN THOUGH THE CONSERVATIVES STRONGLY OPPOSE THE CUTS IN DEFENSE SPENDING WHICH THE GOVERNMENT SEEKS.

4. THE CONSERVATIVES HAVE TABLED THEIR OWN AMENDMENT TO THE CAREFULLY WORDED GOVERNMENT MOTION (REFTEL A) (WHICH WAS CAST TO GET THE WIDEST POSSIBLE SUPPORT BY MILDLY SEEKING THE HOUSE SIMPLY TO "TAKE NOTE" OF THE DEFENSE UNCLASSIFIED

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ESTIMATES) TO ALLOW THE HOUSE TO EXPRESS REGRET QUOTE THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S DEFENSE POLICY HAS RESULTED IN OUR FORCES BEING SERIOUSLY DEPRIVED OF MODERN EQUIPMENT NECESSARY TO MAINTAIN, WITH THE OTHER MEMBERS OF THE NORTH ATLANTIC ALLIANCE, SUFFICIENT CONVENTIONAL CAPABILITY TO DETER ACTS OF AGGRESSION, TO SUSTAIN AN EFFECTIVE FIGHTING FORCE IN THE EVENT OF ACTUAL HOSTILITIES AND THEREBY TO STRENGTHEN OUR INFLUENCE IN FORMULATING THE POLICIES OF THE ALLIANCE. UNQUOTE

5. IF THIS CONSERVATIVE AMENDMENT IS CALLED, IT WILL ASSURE THE GOVERNMENT A SOUND MAJORITY AS IT WILL SEND LEFT-WINGERS, THE LIBERALS AND THE GOVERNMENT INTO THE LOBBY TOGETHER.

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Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
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